companies for the opening of National Long Distances Services;

(b) whether the same norms are applicable for the foreign companies; and

(c) the present position with regard to issuing licences for opening National Long Distances Services?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) No such norms have been finalised.

(c) Does not arise in view of (a) and (b) above.

Losses incurred by P&T on Postal Stationery

5373. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the P&T Department is incurring a loss of about Rs. 200 crores on postal stationery per year;

(b) the main reasons for such heavy loss, inspite of periodical rise in the prices of postal item; and

(c) what measures Government contemplate to overcome the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The total average cost in respect of some postal stationery items is more than the average revenue during the year 1999-2000 (Projection) to the extent of Rs. 350.76 crores.

(b) The cost of operation of various services of the Department of Posts, which is pre-dominantly labour intensive, is increasing due to revision of pay and allowances from time to time. Since, the Department of Posts is a public utility service Department, affordability factor is to be kept in view while revising postal tariffs for different services to cover the cost of such services. Besides, the Government policy of extending postal facilities in rural and tribal areas involves substantial element of subsidy which add to the over all deficit of the Department of Posts.

(c) The Department of Posts has been making all out efforts to control expenditure and enhance revenue, in order to contain the deficit. Expenditure control is effected through economy measures and closer monitoring of expenditure. Postal tariffs are revised from time to time to reduce the subsidy provided in each service keeping in view the eventual social obligation of the Department. The Department of Posts is also making all out efforts to mobilise

additional resources through better marketing of premium products services like speed post, business post etc.

Better facilities to subscribers

5374. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the telephone users in the country are facing innumerable problems;

(b) whether Governments are also aware that complaints about faulty telephones are not attended to for months together; and

(c) what steps are being taken to ensure better facilities so that people are not attracted towards to telephones being provided by private companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Problems faced by users are continuously monitored by the Government through various Public Grievances Cells and Fault Reporting Systems. Attempts are made to repair most of the faulty telephones within norms. However, sometimes delays take place due to cable faults, major break down of lines, prolonged power failure etc. especially in rural areas. Such faults due to their nature, take longer time to rectify.

(c) To improve customer satisfaction with the service, following steps have been taken:

(i) Line staff are being given behavioural training.

(ii) Computerisation of following services in all exchanges is being done.
   (a) Fault repair service
   (b) Directory enquiry
   (c) Billing

(iii) More and more Remote Switching Units (RSUs) are being installed to reduce the underground cable length and thereby reducing fault liability.

(iv) Pagers are being provided to reduce fault clearance duration.

(v) Bill payment through banks.

Opening of Post Offices in Orissa

5375. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state: